



Research a Nontraditional Career

Introduction

The best way for students to determine if a nontraditional career is right for them is to find out firsthand what will be expected (knowledge and skills) and the work environment they will encounter. In this activity, students will learn to use various resources in their community to answer questions about nontraditional careers they are interested in, and they will share what they have learned with each other.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify companies in their community that have job opportunities in their areas of interest.
- Explore nontraditional careers by making on-site visits and/or conducting personal interviews to increase their knowledge of particular jobs and the work environments.
- Complete self-assessments about their values, skills, and physical abilities and compare to job requirements for careers of interest.
- Prepare oral reports (approximately 5 minutes) to share what they have learned and any decisions they have made about their career choices with the class.

Preparation

Before beginning this activity you will want to develop a list of employers and resources in the community in which the students may be seeking employer contacts. The list should provide contact names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses and include:

- Local Chamber of Commerce
- Area businesses and industries
- Union-sponsored apprenticeship programs
- Non-union apprenticeship programs
- Federal contractors
- Area career and technical schools and community colleges

You will also want to consider the types of questions that the students should ask during their interviews with workers. For a more in-depth study of a nontraditional career, have students complete the Worksite Observation Report provided under “Forms” in this Awareness section.

Strategies

- Encourage students to make their own contacts to set up on-site visits and interviews. But, follow up and make sure all on-site visits have been approved by company officials.
- Ask students what they would like to learn about the job and have them help prepare the interview questions.
- Since students are exploring nontraditional careers, have them interview a worker who is nontraditional such as a male student interviewing a male nurse and a female student interviewing a female automotive technician.

- Schedule enough time for students to give class presentations and to discuss how this activity may have changed their minds about their career choices.
Note: Explain to the students that it is all right to change their minds, and that it is better to know that a particular job is not right for them before they complete the training and become employed in a job that is not satisfying to them.

Evaluation

Has this activity helped students with the following?

- Make decisions about their career choices
- Clarify their values and work interests
- Review the realities of any jobs they are interested in
- Identify the education and skills needed in their chosen field

If you answered “No” to any of the above, what could be done to improve this activity?

Suggested Interview Questions

Use the questions below or create your own to learn more about the nontraditional career you will be exploring. After you have decided what questions to ask, write them on the next two pages and take notes during the interview.

Working Responsibilities

- What do you do on a typical day?
- What are your five most important activities?

Products and Services

- What does the company produce?
- What service does the company provide its customers?
- What impact does this company have on the local community and/or environment?

Organizational Structure

- What is the company's management structure?
- How are decisions made?
- Are employees unionized? If so, how does the union assist employees?

Specific Qualifications

- What knowledge and experience do you need to do your job?
- How could I get the training and education required to do your job?

Working Conditions and Benefits

- What is the salary range for a job like yours?
- What opportunities are there to move to other jobs in the company?
- What kinds of benefits does the company provide (for example, health insurance, pension plan, paid vacation time)?
- What working conditions make this job pleasant (for example, flexible hours, private office, relaxed dress code, fitness facility, travel, etc.)?
- What support services are available to nontraditional employees?
- What advancement opportunities are available to nontraditional employees?

Life Planning

- What do you remember about being my age?
- How did you get from high school to where you are now in your career?
- What one piece of advice would you give me if I wanted to pursue this career?
- Would you still pursue a nontraditional career? (Include this question if you are interviewing a nontraditional employee.)
- What skills do you use here that could also be useful at other jobs?

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Interview Questions

| Questions | Notes |
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Interview Questions (continued)

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#7 _____

#8 _____

#9 _____

#10 _____

